

Growing International Education in Regional Australia

Australian Government response to the Expert Members of the Council for International Education

APRIL 2019

Introduction

On 22 March 2019, the Expert Members of the Council for International Education provided their advice to the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, on how to grow international education in regional Australia.

The advice was aimed at addressing strategic action 9.2 of the *National Strategy for International Education 2025*:

Australia will attract more international students to regional communities by promoting internationally the excellence and the advantages of education, training and research in regional Australia.

The advice was informed by nation-wide consultations led by Expert Members with participation of a broad range of education, government, business and community stakeholders.

The Australian Government welcomes the advice of Expert Members, which includes nine proposals in four key action areas: structural incentives and funding incentives, destination marketing and branding and community incentives. There is a role for the Australian Government to facilitate actions one to three, with state, territory and local governments best placed to facilitate on action four, in partnership with institutions, business and community groups in their jurisdictions.

The Government's response to advice from Expert Members is also feeding into work led by the Hon Dr Denis Napthine to improve education opportunities and outcomes in regional Australia, in recognition of the significant value that international students bring to regionally-based institutions and communities.

1. Structural Incentives

1.1 Introduce an additional year of post-study work visa for students who study in regionally-based institutions, consistent with the minimum requirements of the current student visa framework.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

As part of the Government's population strategy, *A Plan for Australia's Future Population*, the Prime Minister announced an extra year of post-study work rights for international students who study and live in regional Australia.

This initiative provides for an extra year of post-study work rights on a second Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visa. International students who graduated with a higher education or postgraduate

qualification in a regional area, and can demonstrate ongoing residence in a regional area while on their first Temporary Graduate visa, may be eligible.

The definition of regional Australia for this purpose will be the same of as the definition announced for skilled migration – all of Australia except Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

1.2 Consider expanding access to these visas across a broader range of education sectors.

The Australian Government notes this proposal.

Australia's post-study work rights are competitive by international standards, providing options for all eligible international graduates.

International students graduating with skills and qualifications relating to an occupation on the Medium and Long Term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL), including in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, can currently be granted 18 months on a Temporary Graduate (Graduate Work stream) visa.

2. Funding Incentives

2.1 Establish a new regional excellence scholarships program by directing a proportion of existing Australian government scholarships to students studying at a regional campus.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

As part of the population strategy, the Government announced it will establish a new scholarship – Destination Australia, to encourage more international and Australian students to study in regional Australia. This initiative provides \$93.7 million over four years from 2019-20 to support over one thousand international and Australian students per year to study in the regions.

The scholarships will provide financial assistance of up to \$15,000 per student, per year, to support study and living expenses associated with studying a Certificate IV to Doctoral level qualification at a regional campus of an eligible registered tertiary education provider.

3. Destination Marketing and Branding

3.1 Adopt a nationally consistent approach to marketing and promotions through Australia's new nation brand, and use Study in Australia and other digital platforms to promote the unique strengths and attributes of regionally-based institutions through targeted campaigns.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) is refreshing the Study in Australia (SIA) website to include information on Australia's diverse study destinations. SIA is the Australian Government's digital interface promoting Australian education and related services.

The SIA refresh utilises the six attributes of Australian education (diversity, employability, environment, quality, student experience and visionary) developed in partnership with states,

territories and the sector to improve consistency in marketing Australia's international education and training value proposition.

Under a new nation brand, Austrade will build on these initiatives to develop marketing materials and targeted campaigns, to promote regional study destinations.

3.2 Engage and support education agents to be promoters and champions of institutions in a broader range of study destinations.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

Agents are an important source of information and play a pivotal role in the student decision-making process. Department of Education and Training data show 74 per cent of international students come to Australia through an education agent.

While the engagement and support of education agents is the responsibility of individual institutions, Austrade is engaging with the education agent network, to promote the benefits of studying in regional Australia.

A 'GoBeyond' marketing toolkit is being developed for agents, regional marketing bodies and institutions to encourage students to consider studying beyond Australia's major cities.

These initiatives are complemented by work in the Department of Education and Training to assist education providers to meet their obligations regarding agents as set out in the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018. This work aims to acknowledge the valuable role played by international education agents and the good performance achieved by the majority of agents.

3.3 Encourage co-investment in collaborative marketing in collaboration with state and territory governments.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

As the lead agency for the marketing and promotion of Australian education, Austrade is working with state and territory government agencies to establish a collaborative marketing fund. The fund will operate on an opt-in basis and be used to develop targeted digital campaigns aimed at increasing the diversity of Australia's student cohort and study destinations. The fund will also feature a consumer research and insights component to better understand student motivations and choice.

The co-investment approach builds on the pilot 'GoBeyond' campaign which ran in five markets (Indonesia, Malaysia, Colombia, Brazil and the Philippines) in mid-2018, reaching 12.8 million people.

4. Community Incentives

4.1 Build capacity of study destinations through coordination of state, territory and community support for internships, work experience, accommodation, student services and connection to community through cultural and sporting events.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

The Government, through the Enabling Growth and Innovation (EGI) fund, has commissioned research from Universities Australia into the barriers and opportunities for international students accessing work integrated learning (WIL), including in regional Australia. It has also commissioned work to enhance the 2018 International Student Survey to capture information on the cost of studying and living in regional Australia compared to metropolitan areas. These research and survey findings will add to the evidence base for study destinations looking to build their capacity to host growing numbers of international students.

The Government will continue to encourage education institutions to work closely with state and territory and local government, business and community groups to ensure that destinations build on their capacity to provide international students with the best possible education and living experience no matter where they choose to study.

4.2 Coordinate the provision of services across government to ensure key infrastructure, including transport and ICT, is in place to support international students.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

The Government is working with state, territory and local governments to support infrastructure development in regional Australia, including through infrastructure investment programs, such as City Deals and Regional Deals. This includes university campus development projects that will boost the capacity and attractiveness of regions to students, such as those highlighted in the Darwin and Launceston City Deals.

4.3 Promote the value of coordinated approaches to better support international students and to develop the right model for each study destination.

The Australian Government supports this proposal.

The Government, through the EGI fund, has provided support to the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) to develop communication tools for employers and communities to promote the value of Australian international education, including to regional Australia. The Government welcomes the ongoing leadership of Expert Members and other sector leaders in encouraging whole-of-community approaches to building and maintaining the capacity of study destinations across regional Australia.